



King County

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King County set to begin noxious weed surveys

The King County Noxious Weed Control Program this month will begin its annual roadside surveys for noxious weeds and is reminding landowners to keep an eye out for the non-native invasive plants.

Landowners with noxious weeds on their property will be contacted and reminded that weed control is a landowner responsibility. Early identification helps landowners control and contain weed infestations before they become a time-consuming and expensive problem. King County's weed program focuses on education, helps landowners identify noxious weeds and offers technical assistance by suggesting the best control options for each site.

Generally speaking, noxious weeds are non-native plants that are aggressive, competitive or difficult to control. Noxious does not mean toxic, although a noxious weed can have toxic properties. The State Noxious Weed Board updates the noxious weed list annually. If a plant is not on the State Noxious Weed List, it cannot be on the County Noxious Weed List.

The following plants are spring growers and will be a focus in the early surveys:

- **Giant hogweed** – Often reaching over 14 feet tall with huge leaves, dark purple stems and white umbrella-shaped flower heads, this plant is a health hazard, causing painful blisters and scarring.
- **Gorse** – Similar to Scot's broom with yellow pea-like flowers, gorse is covered with two-inch spines.
- **Dalmatian toadflax** – Waxy heart-shaped leaves and yellow snapdragon-like flowers are found on slender two-foot tall stalks growing along roadsides, in fields and pastures.
- **Tansy ragwort** – This time of year the leafy rosettes are present, developing the yellow daisy-like flowers later in the season. This weed is also toxic to livestock in the rosette stage.
- **Garlic mustard** – This extremely fast growing, shade tolerant plant is about two feet tall with small, white, four-petaled flowers and a strong garlic smell from the leaves and root.

Controlling noxious weeds is everyone's responsibility. Now is the time to take action against the invasive plants that thrive in our area. With more than 7,500 identified weed sites, landowners cannot start early enough on control.

To find out more about the noxious weed program, please call (206) 296-0290; e-mail noxious.weeds@metrokc.gov; or visit the Web site at www.dnr.metrokc.gov/weeds.

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